

# GAMESTAR MECHANIC

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<http://a.freshbrain.com/solvr/>

## WHAT IS GAMESTAR MECHANIC?

Gamestar Mechanic is an interactive game-designing website that allows students to play, design, and share video games. It uses system-based thinking, creative problem solving, writing, storytelling, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) skills (according to [Gamestarmechanic.com](http://Gamestarmechanic.com)). Students complete a “quest” to earn sprites (tools for game design) and badges. Students can also go directly to “workshop” and create games.

## WHO SHOULD USE IT?

The site is geared towards students in grades 4-9. Teachers can use it with students in a classroom setting, or students can use it independently at home.

## WHY USE IT EDUCATIONALLY?

It is sneaky learning, because it's fun! Teachers or a SLMS can assign the “quest” section for homework (a series of playing miniature games to help students “earn” sprites. Students later use sprites to build/design their own games. Teacher and SLMS can discuss game-designing strategies, elements of design, user ability and system design to help students understand special problems.

### SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT

A 7<sup>th</sup> grade Technology class is assigned to develop and “beta-test” one video game using Gamestar Mechanic. Students will be assigned to complete the “Quest” portion of the program for homework (over the course of a week), and then will use class time to develop a game for their peers, relating to ecological systems. The students will then share the game with the class, and the other students will make comments/suggestions. Students will make necessary changes, and share their games with the online community.



Gamestar Mechanic's homepage.

## PROS

Free (option to upgrade to premium)

Cool, “kid-friendly” graphic novel interface.

Easy to use and difficulty is progressive (teaches through series of games).

Students can share their work and receive feedback from others.

Students learn skills in a FUN and interactive way.

Not heavily focused on coding.

## CONS

Must purchase for some functions.

Interface can be busy/confusing to some students.

Students must read at a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level to use program.

Students must have access to a computer and an Internet connection.

Not great for universal design.

AND

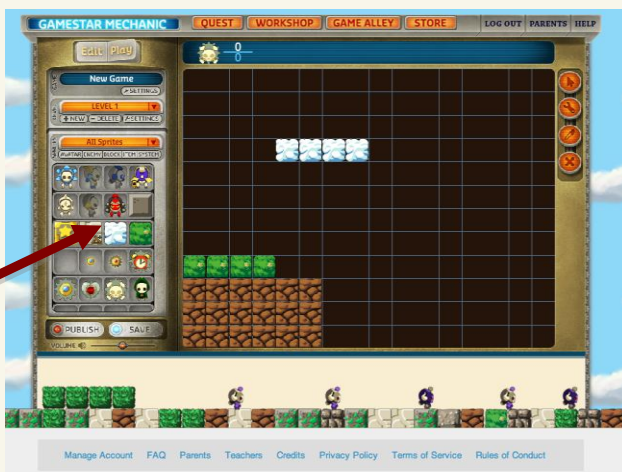
## Using Gamestar Mechanic Educationally



**Step 1.** Students sign up for closed accounts within a teacher's account. Students begin to learn the basics of the types of games they will be designing through a series of quests.



**Step 2.** After completing the quest, students use the components they have “earned” to start creating games within “workshop”.



**Step 3.** Students begin to design games by adding different elements like sprites, floor/tile pieces, clouds, and more. Students can toggle with settings, set goals or perimeters, add enemies, set the gravity and point of view.



**Step 4.** Students can share their finished game with other students in the class, or a larger gaming community using “game alley”. Students use others’ feedback to make their games better!